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Child of Necessity

The Story of the Beginnings and of the Continuing Services of The International Missionary Council

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IF NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION, so also is it the mother of many agencies operating in the world today. One of these is the International Missionary Council. This Council came into being thirty-five years ago to meet a growing need in the world mission of the churches. It continues because the need continues. What this need is, and therefore what the International Missionary Council is, unfolds in the following brief story.

The end-product of a bakery is bread. Dough is mixed, shaped, baked, and out comes a crusty loaf to be attractively wrapped and sold to satisfy human hunger. The concern of the International Missionary Council is also with bread, the Bread of Life—that it may be made available to men everywhere to meet human hunger, the hunger for life and for the Living God.

How does the International Missionary Council help in this high endeavor? If its help is vital, significant, indispensable, Christian men and women should know about it. One may look through a big plate-glass window into a modern bakery, and see just what a bakery is and what it does. It is not so easy to see just what the International Missionary Council is and does. But the story can be told.

From Tranquebar to Mohonk

The first Protestant missionaries went to Tranquebar in India in 1706—a quarter millennium ago. A great extension of mission work, ushering in the modern missionary movement as we know it today, is generally conceded to have begun with William Carey's going to India in 1793.

During the first half of the following century, scores of missionaries went from European, British, and North American countries to Asia, Africa, South America, and the islands of the

seas. During these five decades, problems arose which called for consultations across denominational and national lines. And so in New York, in May 1854, and again in October of that same year, conferences of missionaries and mission board secretaries were called to counsel together on the recruitment and preparation of missionaries and to consider "not planting stations on the same ground." Other similar conferences followed—one in London in 1878, another in 1888, and still another in New York in 1900.

All these conferences were preliminary to the first representative *world* missionary conference, the one held in Edinburgh in 1910. To this conference came not only delegates from 46 British, 60 American, 41 Continental and 12 South African and Australasian societies but also a few national representatives from the churches in Japan, Korea, China, India, Burma, Ceylon, and Africa. This conference concerned itself with world evangelization, mission churches, mission schools, the non-Christian religions, the preparation of missionaries, home-base support, missions and governments, and cooperation and unity. With respect to this last theme, the conference concluded that the creation of an international committee to "serve as a medium of communication between all missionary societies is *absolutely necessary* for the carrying out of any statesmanlike and concerted plan for the evangelization of the world."

Out of this conclusion came the *Edinburgh Continuation Committee,* the immediate forerunner of the *International Missionary Council.* The Council itself came into corporate existence at a representative conference at Lake Mohonk, New York, in October, 1921. Some of the functions laid down at its founding were: to study mission problems and to disseminate information; to co-ordinate missionary activities for united action; to enlist public opinion in support of freedom of religion and of missionary endeavor; to unite all Christian forces

in seeking justice and righteousness in international and interracial relations; and to call area and world mission conferences. Today thirty-four years later, the International Missionary Council continues to do the things set forth in this charter. It is now the recognized coordinating agency of the world-wide missionary movement of most Protestant churches.

Servant of the World Mission

The International Missionary Council is a servant of the Church in terms of its world mission. It does many things in the interest of that mission, but its chief concern is not with the secondary or the supplemental, but with the mission itself as the vibrant expression of God's eternally redemptive purpose. Its abiding aim is "to further the effective proclamation to all men of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." To this high end, it performs routine services and engages in a changing variety of special projects.

A partial listing will give form and color to these general statements. *The Council's* secretaries, by extensive travel and correspondence, keep in contact with church and missionary leaders throughout the world. They give information, counsel, encouragement. They undertake, or enlist others to undertake, special surveys in different fields of mission endeavor to point the way for more effective advance. They publish *The International Review of Missions* through which the best thinking and the ripened experience of missionaries and other church leaders are made available to all. They keep in touch with world movements in church and state and education and technical services in order to advance and enrich the world mission.

Sitting Down Together

From time to time, the International Missionary Council convenes area or world con-

ferences to stimulate missionary thinking, missionary cooperation, and missionary advance. Four notable world conferences have been held.

1. THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE, in 1928, was fairly representative of the Protestant missionary forces of the world. One of its outstanding contributions was the formulation of a missionary statement of the Christian message. This statement focussed the attention of the churches on the central claims and promises and power of the Gospel for all men, saying "Christ is our motive and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less, and we can give nothing more."

2. MADRAS (Tambaram), INDIA, in 1938, dramatized the fact that the Gospel had spread to almost all lands and that the Church, the Body of Christ, had become truly universal. It was the most representative Christian conference, geographically speaking, ever held. In this conference, the sharp distinctions between church and mission were seen to be breaking down. Its message statement said, "Knit by the Holy Spirit the one to the other and all to God, we know the meaning of fellowship."

3. WHITBY, CANADA, 1947, restored contact, following World War II, between those who had been on opposite sides of the conflict or had been otherwise isolated from one another. It called on the older and younger churches to recognize their "partnership in obedience" to Christ and to engage in expectant evangelism throughout the whole world. "The terror and the splendor of the present age call for nothing less than wholehearted loyalty to God in Christ."

4. WILLINGEN, GERMANY, 1952, faced the rise of nationalism, the revival of non-Christian religions, and the fragmenting power of communism and other demonic forces at work in the world and called all Christians to a new reali-

zation of their unity and mission in Christ. "In Christ, we see God's redemptive action; in Christ, God is still at work reconciling all things to Himself in one restored humanity . . . . . There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world."

Orphaned Missions

The work of the International Missionary Council on behalf of European missionaries cut off during World War II from normal support is one of the most notable expressions of Christian brotherliness and concern in the whole history of the Christian Church. Missionaries sent out by European societies to Africa, India, Southeast Asia, and South America were completely isolated from their parent bodies. Many schools and hospitals and their workers were similarly left without support. The groups thus cut off came to be called "orphaned missions."

In order to survive, these orphaned missions had to be adopted by Christians who could and would support them. The International Missionary Council established contact with them, sent out the challenge of need, collected funds, discovered channels for remittances, received reports of what was being accomplished and reported back to the donors. After the initial steps had been taken, the Lutheran World Federation made an all-out appeal to Lutherans and collected vast sums. Many other churches responded to the challenge. All together, the staggering total of over ten million dollars was collected and disbursed. Only now (December 1955) has the project come to an end by reason of the resumption of normal support for these erstwhile orphaned groups.

Liberty and Justice

The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, jointly sponsored by the I.M.C. and the World Council of Churches, works quietly with important committees of the United

Nations and with individual governments to promote religious liberty and international justice, understanding, and good will. The very nature of its work is such that its day by day efforts can not be widely publicized. Its achievements, however, are impressive, and churchmen everywhere should rejoice to know that the Christian ideals of social righteousness find expression through this Commission in the very places where international attitudes and policies are being formulated.

Current Emphases and Concerns

I. Better Training for Christian Workers

Christian leaders everywhere today are interested in theological education. Concern grows out of a recent and continuing interest in theology itself: What, after all, is the Christian Faith? What do Christians believe? And what is the Christian message to the world? The International Missionary Council's special interest in this realm centers on the need for better theological education and leadership training on mission fields. The interest broadens, however, to take in the whole field of the recruiting and effective use of leaders. Three major efforts are now under way.

1. On the basis of the Council's thoroughgoing survey of *theological education in Africa*, three regional reports showing what is now being done, wherein the present effort is inadequate, and what should be done to strengthen and expand the total program have been widely circulated among mission and church agencies. The International Missionary Council, however, is not satisfied with having made the survey and circulated its findings. Imbedded in the findings are imperatives that must be obeyed. Courses of study must be revised, faculties must be strengthened, libraries enlarged, and buildings and equipment provided. The Council, therefore, is lending every possible encouragement to mission agencies to do what the situation

desperately demands. Beyond this it is now seeking to raise a substantial fund with which to give practical point to its encouragement.

2. A survey of *theological education in Madagascar* is projected for the fall of 1956. This, too, will be significant only as it results not just in discovering what needs to be done but in doing it. The I.M.C.'s task will not be finished until action follows survey.

3. In Bangkok, early in 1956, a *theological conference* will bring together students and faculty members from the theological colleges of Southeast Asia. This conference, sponsored by the Nanking Theological Seminary Board of Founders, by the I.M.C. and the World Council, will study the different forms and functions of the Christian ministry and questions of adequate training and support. Attention will also be given to the best methods and the best literature for proclaiming the Gospel to the adherents of non-Christian religions.

II. Christian Home and Family Life

The missionary home has long been recognized as one of the chief evangelizing agencies. Moreover, the influence of other Christian homes—Indian, African, Japanese—has never been entirely overlooked in the total Christian impact on a non-Christian community. Only recently, however, have Christian leaders made a coordinated effort to help Christian homes to become more deeply, intelligently, and effectively Christian. For the past five years, this effort has been sponsored by the International Missionary Council under the caption of *Christian Home and Family Life Emphasis*. Real beginnings have been made in Burma, in the Philippines, in Japan, Korea, and Thailand under the direction of an expert giving full time to the effort. Moving across denominational lines and from country to country, this worker has helped to prepare and circulate charts, prayers, posters, booklets, and magazines designed to encourage parents to make their homes more fully Chris-

tian. She also shows how to do it. Conferences of workers have been called to exchange ideas and train those who can train others to achieve that kind of family living which honors Christ and the Church. In these conferences, and in the prepared literature, such themes as these are dealt with: Christian Marriage; Preparation for Marriage; The Church and the Family; Parent-Child Relationships; The Family and the Community. This whole emphasis has infinite possibilities which must be pursued until it is a part of the program of the churches in every area.

III. Centers for Study of Non-Christian Faiths

At the turn of the present century, the missionary leaders of the world were greatly concerned about the non-Christian religions — Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and others. Some scholars were always at work in an effort to understand these religions, to know their history, their sacred books, their ritual, their influence on individual and community life. The results of their scholarly pursuits were made available to the missionaries and to pastors and teachers to help them make a more effective evangelistic approach to the adherents of these religions.

In the years following World War I, however, intensive study tended to decline. Only the occasional scholar continued this line of endeavor. Many leaders came to believe that the so-called "acids of modernity," the very impact of western scientific thought, would cause these ancient religions to disintegrate and disappear. But they have not disintegrated; they are rather experiencing a revival. In some notable instances, they are also undergoing great change in order more effectively to bid for the allegiance of people who are themselves undergoing change.

The imperative of this situation is that the missions and the younger churches must build up study centers where at least some of their workers can come to grips with these non-Christian religions, develop a literature designed to

interpret the Christian faith to their adherents, and to help all pastors, teachers, and missionaries working among them to know how best to convey the treasure of the Christian Faith in vessels familiar to the people themselves. Stimulating the churches and the missionary agencies to establish these study centers is one of the most potentially fruitful projects the Council is pursuing.

IV. World Christian Books

Another current and significant project of the International Missionary Council is its sponsorship of *World Christian Books*. Many agencies are cooperating in this effort to produce "a series of short, simply written books" dealing with the doctrine and practice of the Christian Faith, designed for world-wide circulation. The books are first printed and circulated in English, the language most widely known throughout the world. Many, however, will be translated into other languages. The books are small and inexpensive. The ones already published, in a series which may reach the proportions of a small library, are as follows: *The Christians' God, Christian Giving, Mark's Witness to Jesus Christ, Christianity and Science, The Christian as Citizen, The Christian Character, Reading the Bible Today, John's Witness to Jesus, From Brahma to Christ, How the Church Grew.* The first book which was published only in late 1954 has already been translated into fourteen other languages.

V. Study of the Younger Churches

The phrase "younger churches" is in common use to distinguish between relatively older churches of the missionary-sending western countries and the relatively younger churches on the mission fields. It is not altogether a happy phrase; for example, some churches on the mission fields are ancient churches. But it is a convenient phrase and is in wide use. Currently, these younger churches are coming into their

own with a sense of their own importance and responsibility. The distinction between church and mission is being broken down. Missions are now surrendering to the churches prerogatives which they have held all too long. Churches which formerly were glad enough to leave all evangelistic effort to the mission are now seeing that they cannot be real churches without having a missionary outreach of their own.

Some years ago the International Missionary Council made a thorough study of the economic strength and weakness of the younger churches. Now what is needed is to know thoroughly their spiritual strength and weakness, their understanding of the Christian Faith, the degree of their removal from non-Christian thought and practice, their own joy and hope and victory as Christians, the influence of their faith on those around them, and their sense of mission to witness by life and by word to their own community and to the world. This study, the Council has already begun. For example, one trained worker is living for weeks on end in different Christian villages in Uganda in order to learn firsthand the inner life and thought of those who make up the fellowship of the church and the effectiveness of their Christian witness. In this and in other ways and in other areas, the study will be pursued vigorously.

Organizational Structure

The International Missionary Council works for and through its 35 constituent bodies. These bodies are of two kinds: 1. National *Christian* Councils on the various mission fields of the world and 2. National *Missionary* Councils in the West. The National Christian Council of India, the Christian Council of South Africa, and the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches are three examples of the 21 constituent bodies of the Council at work on the mission fields of Asia, Africa and South America. These councils, historically and currently, are

ERRATUM

In the printing of this folder, the captions, *National Missionary Councils* and *National Christian Councils*, on page 13 became interchanged. The list of countries beginning with Brazil should be under the heading, *National Christian Councils*, and the list beginning with Australia should be under the heading, *National Missionary Councils.*

—J. R. W.

integral parts of the missionary enterprise of the Church. The National *Missionary* Councils are located in the West and in Australasia. The Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and the Department of Overseas Missions of the Canadian Council of Churches, which together represent about one hundred mission boards in North America, are missionary council units of the International Missionary Council. Still another, on the Continent, is the German Evangelical Missionary Council. These three, and eleven other similar councils related to the I.M.C., fourteen in all, are primarily and almost exclusively foreign mission agencies. The countries thus represented in the constituent membership of the International Missionary Council in the two groupings are:

National ~~Missionary~~ Councils		National ~~Christian~~ Councils	
Brazil	Malaya	Australia	Sweden
Burma	Mexico	Belgium	Switzerland
Ceylon	Near East	Canada	United States
China	Pakistan	Denmark	
Congo	Philippines	Finland	
Cuba	Puerto Rico	France	
India	River Plate	Germany	
Indonesia	Sierra Leone	Great Britain	
Jamaica	South Africa	Netherlands	
Japan	Thailand	New Zealand	
Korea		Norway	

In addition to these 35 councils, the I.M.C. maintains contact with twenty-one other councils or committees on mission fields. It also often serves mission agencies in the West which are not within its organizational structure.

The International Missionary Council's governing body is called *The Assembly*. The Assembly is composed of seventy-seven members, including at least one from each of the National *Christian* Councils and the National *Missionary* Councils. By constitutional provision, the Council normally meets once every four years. An Administrative Committee, appointed by The Assembly, transacts the business of the Council between Assembly meetings. The Council has an office in New York and one in Lon-

don. It has a permanent staff in both offices, and the General Secretary uses each office alternately as his base of operation.

The I.M.C. and the W.C.C.

The International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches are two independent, autonomous bodies. The two differ in constituent membership. The I.M.C. is a council of councils, as indicated above. The W.C.C. is a council of churches or denominations. The two differ also in scope of purpose. I.M.C. concerns are distinctively and almost exclusively missionary, while W.C.C. concerns touch the total life, structure, faith, order, and program of the churches. Even so, the I.M.C. and the W.C.C. are so closely related at the point of the missionary outreach of the Church that they work in closest association with each other. Together, they support the East Asia secretary. Together they support The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. Through a joint committee, they work together at the points of their common interest in the world mission of the Church.

An Indispensable Servant

It is the abiding conviction of those who serve and of those who know intimately the objectives, achievements, and continuing service of the International Missionary Council that it is not only a useful but an indispensable servant of the Church in its missionary outreach. As such it merits the intelligent interest and financial support of all Christians who believe that "God has sent forth one Saviour, one Shepherd to seek and save all the lost, one Redeemer who by His death, resurrection and ascension has broken down the barrier between man and God, accomplished a full and perfect atonement, and created in Himself one new humanity, the Body of which Christ is the exalted and regnant Head."

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